

## June 1, 2009 - House Members Request GAO Report on Former Senior Trade Staff

### House Members Request GAO Report on Former Senior Trade Staff

Washington, DC - Congresswoman

Louise M. Slaughter today joined with seven other lawmakers in asking the General Accounting Office for a probe into whether former top government trade officials are inappropriately using their influence to hurt American companies. The request comes amid reports that several top Bush-era staffers are now working on issues that have the potential to harm U.S. workers.

"We need to slam the revolving door so that government employees do not walk out of their office and into lobbying positions where they may work against the best interests of American workers and industries," said Slaughter. "I hope that a detailed GAO probe into this issue will shed some light on this questionable practice."

The letter notes that a number of former trade officials and staff "have chosen to represent foreign producer interests, either directly

or through importing parties, on a Section 421 case at the International Trade Commission." This case, which relates to a provision in U.S. trade law dealing with surging imports of products from China, is being considered at the ITC and is subject of a hearing tomorrow, June 2. The Chinese government has been aggressively seeking to influence the outcome of the case, including engaging in inappropriate contacts with ITC officials. The former trade officials and staff involved in representing Chinese interests in this case served in key policy jobs during the Bush Administration.

"Our letter seeks information on former U.S. government personnel who developed and implemented our nation's trade policy but are now advising and representing foreign interests. Many of these individuals appear to be repaying the investment that the American taxpayers made in them with their hard-earned tax dollars by using the knowledge, expertise and contacts they gained while on the federal payroll in ways that are adverse to the interests of our workers and our producers," said Rep. Mike Michaud.

"Our nation is experiencing an economic crisis which, in part, has been fueled by a skyrocketing international trade deficit," said Representative Betty Sutton. "At any time, but certainly at this key time, we must not ignore the actions of former government officials and staff who are undermining our nation's ability to return to a path of economic growth. We need to broadly examine the activities of these people and determine what steps may be appropriate to restrict their actions in the future."

A  
copy of the letter appears below:

June 1, 2009

Mr. Gene Dodaro

Acting Comptroller General

Government Accountability Office

441 G Street,  
NW

Washington,  
DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

We are writing to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) provide us with a report on the activities of former U.S. government personnel who were involved in the development and implementation of trade policy who, after leaving federal service, represent and advise foreign interests, including importing parties here in the U.S. At any time, but certainly in this time of economic crisis, we must question the appropriateness of those who have been involved in the formulation of our nation's trade policies, who use the knowledge and contacts gained in government in a manner adverse to the interests of domestic producers.

This matter, as you well know, has been recognized by various presidential administrations in the past. Indeed, several administrations have adopted ethics policies that limit or prohibit the activities of former trade officials after their federal service has ended. As well, various limitations on the activities of former staff and officials are covered by Title 18 of the US Code as well as other statutory and regulatory provisions.

Recently, for example, it has come to light that a number of former trade officials - James Jochum, former Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Import Administration, Marguerite Trossevin, former Deputy Chief Counsel for Import Administration at the Department of Commerce, Stephen Claeys, former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Antidumping and Countervailing Duty Operations at the Department of Commerce and David Spooner, former Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Import Administration - have chosen to represent foreign producer interests, either

directly or through importing parties, on a Section 421 case at the International Trade Commission. The use of the knowledge, expertise and contacts they gained during government service is now being adversely applied to U.S. interests. We believe that an examination of the activities of these and other former trade staff and officials is merited to determine whether additional limitations on their post-government employment activities are necessary.

The individuals listed above are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to those who have chosen to represent foreign interests in administrative actions, before the Executive Branch or on Capitol Hill. Taxpayers make substantial investments in the training and salaries of these individuals and trust that they will uphold the public's interests. American taxpayers should not find their hard-earned money used in ways that ultimately jeopardize the interest of those producers who are struggling to survive in an increasingly competitive world market. These individuals should be helping to promote growth and opportunity, not undermine it.

We look forward to working with you and the staff at GAO to clarify the coverage of this study to ensure that the actions and activities of those who have been deeply involved in trade policy development and implementation are analyzed. We believe that this study needs to be comprehensive to cover those who are covered not only by lobbying disclosure or Foreign Agent Registration Act requirements, but to analyze the activities of those who have appeared in legal proceedings on behalf of foreign producers or importers of their products. Additionally, we would hope that the study could be conducted in two phases: First, to cover those individuals, who are involved in pending trade matters and second, to review the activities of former trade staff and officials over the last 15 years.

This Administration has prided itself on having the toughest ethical prescriptions of any presidential administration. We believe that the tone they have set needs to be mirrored in broader ethical rules as we look at former, and future, policy makers and staff involved in international trade matters and what activities they engage in when they leave federal service. Public service is an honor - it should not simply be a ticket to future wealth. We should be putting America's interests ahead of personal pecuniary interests.

Sincerely,

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Michael  
H. Michaud  
Slaughter

Louise

Member  
of Congress  
of Congress

Member

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Tim  
Ryan  
Green

Gene

Member  
of Congress  
of Congress

Member

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Marcy  
Kaptur  
Hare

Phil

Member  
of Congress  
of Congress

Member

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Dennis  
Kucinich  
Sutton

Betty

Member  
of Congress  
of Congress

Member